

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST WOMEN'S FEDERATION
(Biennial Convention, 1975,
reaffirmed 1979, 1981)

The Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation reaffirm[s] the right of any woman of any age or marital or economic status to have an abortion at her own request upon consultation with her physician.

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
(General Synod, 1961)

The question of when life [personhood] begins is basic to the abortion debate. It is primarily a theological question, on which denominations or religious groups must be permitted to establish and follow their own teachings.

Every woman must have the freedom of choice to follow her personal and religious and moral convictions concerning the completion or termination of her pregnancy.

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
(General Conference, 1976, 1984)

When an unacceptable pregnancy occurs, a family, and most of all the pregnant woman, is confronted with the need to make a difficult decision. We believe that continuance of a pregnancy which endangers the life or health of the mother, or poses other serious problems concerning the life, health, or mental capability of the child to be, is not a moral necessity. In such a case, we believe the path of mature Christian judgment may indicate the advisability of abortion. We support the legal right to abortion as established by the 1973 Supreme Court decisions. We encourage women in counsel with husbands, doctors, and pastors to make their own responsible decisions concerning the personal or moral questions surrounding the issue of abortion.

(Resolution on Responsible Parenthood, 1976).

Our belief in the sanctity of unborn human life makes us reluctant to approve abortion. But we are equally bound to respect the sacredness of the life and well-being of the mother, for whom devastating damage may result from an unacceptable pregnancy. In continuity with past Christian teaching, we recognize tragic conflicts of life with life that may justify abortion (Social Principles, 1984).

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH,
NATIONAL YOUTH MINISTRY ORGANIZATION
(Biennial Convocation, 1983)

Freedom of choice in problem pregnancies must be based on the moral judgment of the involved individuals.

Where there is no consistent medical, ethical, or theological consensus, the U.S. Constitution should not be used to force one theological view on all citizens who may believe otherwise.

The U.S. Supreme Court decision of Roe

v. Wade in 1973 guarantees a woman the right to make a personal decision regarding termination of a pregnancy. Any amendment to deconstitutionalize the issue of abortion and invalidate the 1973 decision could set a precedent for endangering all our civil liberties.

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, WOMEN'S CHURCH,
GENERAL BOARD OF GLOBAL MINISTRIES
(1975, reaffirmed 1979, 1980)

We believe deeply that all should be free to express and practice their own moral judgment on the matter of abortion. We also believe that on this matter, where there is no ethical or theological consensus, and where widely differing views are held by substantial sections of the religious community, the Constitution should not be used to enforce one particular religious belief on those who believe otherwise.

UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE U.S.A.
(General Assembly, 1972,
reaffirmed 1978)

Whereas, God has given persons the responsibility of caring for creation as well as the ability to share in it, and has shown his concern for the quality and value of human life; and

Whereas, sometimes when the natural ability to create life and the moral and spiritual ability to sustain it are not in harmony, the decisions to be made must be understood as moral and ethical ones and not simply legal;

Therefore, in support of the concern for the value of human life and human wholeness...the 184th General Assembly:

b. Declares that women should have full freedom of personal choice concerning the completion or termination of their pregnancies and that artificial or induced termination of pregnancy, therefore, should not be

restricted by law, except that it be performed under the direction and control of a properly licensed physician.

UNITED SYNAGOGUE OF AMERICA
(Biennial Convention, 1975)

"In all cases 'the mother's life takes precedence over that of the foetus' up to the minute of its birth. This is to us an unequivocal principle. A threat to her basic health is moreover equated with a threat to her life. To go a step further, a classical responsum places danger to one's psychological health, when well established, on an equal footing with a threat to one's physical health." (1967)

(A)bortions, "though serious even in the early stages of conception, are not to be equated with murder, hardly more than is the decision not to become pregnant."

The United Synagogue affirms once again its position that "abortions involve very serious psychological, religious, and moral

problems, but the welfare of the mother must always be our primary concern."

WOMEN OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
(Triennial Meeting, 1973)

WHEREAS the Church stands for the exercise of freedom of conscience by all and is required to fight for the right of everyone to exercise that conscience, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the decision of the U.S. Supreme Court allowing women to exercise their conscience in the matter of abortion be endorsed by the Church.

WOMEN'S LEAGUE FOR CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM
(Biennial Convention, 1982)

Reverence for life is the cornerstone of our Jewish heritage. Since abortion in Jewish law is primarily for the mother's physical or mental welfare we deplore the burgeoning casual use of abortion. Abortion should be "legally available, but ethically restricted. Though the abortion of a fetus is not equivalent to taking an actual life,

it does represent the destruction of potential life and must not be undertaken lightly...."

However, Women's League also believes that the practice of the principle of the separation of church and state guaranteed by our Constitution has kept our nation strong and preserved full freedom for the individual. Women's League believes that transmitting religious values is the responsibility of the religious sector.

YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN
ASSOCIATION OF THE U.S.A.
(1979)

As an organization rooted in the Christian faith, the YWCA is deeply conscious of the difficult personal and ethical choices raised by the issue of abortion.

The position of the YWCA is not "pro-abortion." It is a position supporting a woman's right to make an individual decision based upon her own religious and

ethical beliefs and her physician's guidance. The answer to the question, "When does personhood begin?" must remain in the ethical and religious realm.

Since there is a wide variation of opinion among religious groups and individuals in our pluralistic society as to when personhood begins and what an ethical decision on abortion may be in different circumstances, the YWCA holds that no one religious belief should be mandated by law. Our government is expressly comManded to make no law establishing any one religion or prohibiting free expression of religion.

APPENDIX D

A CALL TO CONCERN (Signed by 220 American religious ethicists in 1978)

The increasing urgency of the issue of abortion rights requires us as teachers and writers of religious ethics to speak out.

Abortion is a serious and sometimes tragic procedure for dealing with fetal life. It raises important ethical issues and cannot be blandly legitimized by the mere whim of an individual. Nevertheless, it belongs in that large realm of often tragic actions where circumstances can render it a less destructive procedure than the rigid prolongation of pregnancy.

We support the Supreme Court decisions of 1973 which had the effect of removing abortion from the criminal law codes. The Court did not appeal to religion or ethics in arriving at its judgment, but we believe the

decision to have been in accord with sound ethical judgment. Taking note of the fact that theologians, as well as other experts, disagree on the fundamental moral question of when life begins, the Court decided that the law ought not to compel the conscience of those WHO believe abortion to be in harmony with their moral convictions.

In the last four years, however, those decisions have been subjected to a relentless attack from those who take the absolutist position that it is always wrong to terminate a pregnancy at any time after the moment of conception. Those who take this absolutist position have not hesitated to equate abortion at any stage of pregnancy with murder or manslaughter. From such an extreme viewpoint, all legal means are considered justified if they limit abortion, no matter what the human consequences for poor women and others--as in the recent efforts to deny

Medicaid funds and to prohibit use of public hospitals for abortion services.

We feel compelled to affirm an alternative position as a matter of conscience and professional responsibility.

1. The most compelling argument against the inflexibility of the absolutist position is its cost in human misery. The absolutist position does not concern itself about the quality of the entire life cycle, the health and well-being of the mother and family, the question of emotional and economic resources, the cases of extreme deformity. Its total preoccupation with the status of the unborn renders it blind to the well-being and freedom of choice of persons in community.

2. "Pro-life" must not be limited to concern for the unborn; it must include a concern for the quality of life as a whole. The affirmation of life in Judeao-Christian ethics requires a commitment to make life

healthy and whole from beginning to end. Considering the best medical advice, the best moral insight, and a concern for the total quality of the whole life cycle for the born and the unborn, we believe that abortion may in some instances be the most loving act possible.

3. We believe it is wrong to deny Medicaid assistance to poor women seeking abortions. This denial makes it difficult for those who need it most to exercise a legal right, and it implies public censure of a form of medical service which in fact has the moral support of major religious groups.

4. We are saddened by the heavy institutional involvement of the bishops of the Roman Catholic Church in a campaign to enact religiously-based anti-abortion commitments into law, and we view this as a seirous threat to religious liberty and freedom of conscience. We acknowledge the

legal right of all individuals and groups, both religious and secular, to seek laws that reflect their religious and ethical beliefs. But the institutional mobilization of Roman Catholic dioceses, including massive financial contributions by those dioceses to the National Committee for a Human Life Amendment, is inappropriate on this issue. If successful, it would violate the deeply held religious convictions of individual members and official bodies of many other religious groups about when human personhood begins, the relative rights of a woman and a fetus, and responsible family life. This is particularly a problem when there is no clear majority opinion on these fundamental issues nor an adequate social base of consensus for legitimate and enforceable legislation.

5. We call upon the leaders of religious groups supporting abortion rights to speak out more clearly and publicly in

response to the dangerously increasing
influence of the absolutist position. There
may be some ecumenical risks in such candor,
but those risks have already been assumed by
those who have pressed the absolutist
position on religious grounds. In the long
run, the true test of ecumenical authenticity
is the ability to sustain dialogue and
friendship in spite of very sharp
disagreements on matters of substance.